
		EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE: 1—Official Business 2—Necessarily Absent 3—Illness 4—Other
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Those favoring the motion to waive contended:

The budget resolution, as reported, will require all of the Federal share of revenue that will come from any tobacco settlement to go to Medicare. We certainly do not dispute that strengthening Medicare is an important priority, and that giving funds will help Medicare deal with the costs it incurs from treating the smoking-related illnesses of its beneficiaries. However, there are many other valuable programs related to tobacco that new tobacco revenues could be spent on as well. In fact, every major proposal we have seen before this budget resolution, whether put forward by Republicans or Democrats, has suggested using new tobacco revenues for a wide variety of Federal programs designed to stop tobacco use and to treat its victims. We recognize that our Republican colleagues have included other funds in this budget resolution for anti-smoking programs, but they just have not put in enough. For instance, they only have budgeted \$125 million for youth anti-smoking programs in FY 1999. Even the tobacco industry's original proposed settlement would have spent \$2 billion per year on such programs. Further, pouring more money into Medicare without enacting reforms at the same time may, in an odd way, retard our facing up to the long-term challenges of keeping that program solvent. Medicare spending would not increase; in fact, no spending would increase under this budget resolution. The Medicare trust fund would increase, and the United States would have less debt, but Federal spending would stay the same. We want Federal spending to go up on anti-smoking programs. The Conrad et al. amendment would allow us to increase such spending by creating new entitlements that would be paid for with new tobacco taxes. This amendment deserves the support of all Senators.

Those opposing the motion to waive contended:

Here we go again. Our Democratic colleagues have offered yet one more proposal to spend money on new entitlement programs that this budget resolution will instead save for Medicare. This time, at least, our colleagues have been very straightforward about their intent. They have specifically said that the revenues for their proposed new entitlement spending would come from new tobacco taxes. We also applaud them for proposing only new entitlement spending that is directly related to tobacco. However, the language of the budget resolution is still preferable for four main reasons.

First, protecting Medicare is the United States' second greatest challenge after saving Social Security, and, because Medicare is projected to be insolvent much sooner than is Social Security, it is also a more immediate challenge. Discouraging smoking, finding treatments for smoking-related illnesses, and many other anti-tobacco activities are certainly worthy of funding, but they do not outweigh the overriding importance of saving Medicare. Saving Medicare is a greater priority.

Second, one of the major reasons that Medicare is in trouble is that it has to spend so much each year (more than \$25 billion) on smoking-related illnesses. The tobacco settlement is not likely to result in enough funds to cover all of Medicare's smoking-related costs. If that much were demanded the tobacco companies would go broke and nothing would be collected.

Third, if Congress funds these anti-tobacco programs, it should find a better way of paying for them than taking money out of Medicare. We very much agree with our colleagues that spending on programs dedicated to reduce teen smoking are worthwhile; we just disagree with their offset. We have a \$1.7 trillion budget; surely in that huge budget our colleagues can find something that is of less importance than Medicare from which to take the money they want to spend. Is foreign aid more important than Medicare? How about welfare? How about spending on the Commerce Department, or the Energy Department, or any other areas that the Federal Government spends billions of dollars annually? By targeting Medicare to pay for this spending, our colleagues are saying that spending on all other Federal programs is more important than Medicare. We totally disagree.

Fourth, the programs that our colleagues want to spend money on should be funded out of the discretionary side of the budget. However, because our colleagues could not find one single penny's worth of discretionary Federal spending that they thought was less important than spending on anti-smoking programs, they have proposed creating new anti-smoking entitlement programs in order to allow them to use Medicare funds instead. The great danger of this approach is that it makes it very hard to exercise proper oversight. Programs that require annual appropriations are regularly reviewed, which results in their constantly being reworked and redesigned to make them work better and more efficiently. Entitlement programs, on the other hand, have had a disturbing tendency to grow uncontrollably in costs and to resist reforms. In an area such as tobacco addiction it would be especially dangerous to enact new entitlements because we frankly do not know how best to proceed. For instance, in the past 6 years Congress has increased funding by 20 percent for discretionary programs intended to reduce teenage drug abuse, but in that same time frame that abuse has shot up from 15 percent to 22.2 percent.

The bottom line of this amendment is that our colleagues want to use the tobacco tax so that they can increase spending. We oppose this amendment because we want to save money from any new tobacco tax to strengthen Medicare. The choice is clear--should we tax and spend, or should we tax and save Medicare? We choose the latter, and thus oppose this amendment.